EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PURPOSE AND NEED

The Public Utility District No. 1 of Douglas County, Washington (DCPUD) owns and operates the Wells hydroelectric project on the Columbia River. To mitigate adverse impacts on anadromous salmonid fishes associated with the continued operation of the Wells hydroelectric project, the DCPUD establishes this habitat conservation plan (HCP).

The Wells Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) identifies specific on-site measures that the DCPUD will take for fifty (50) years to mitigate Wells' impacts on anadromous salmonids covered by the plan in the reservoir, at the dam, and in the tailrace area. In addition, the DCPUD will provide funding and other assistance for off-site measures intended to increase the productivity of anadromous salmonids, covered by the plan, that are determined to need protection within the plan's term and geographic boundary.

The HCP, and the associated Implementing Agreement (IA) are intended to serve as a pre-listing conservation plan under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973, as amended, and its implementing regulations, and to provide a legal basis for the issuance of an incidental take permit for the anadromous salmonids in the event any of these species is listed as threatened or endangered under the ESA during the term of the Wells HCP.

CURRENT PROJECT STATUS AND RELATED BIOLOGICAL IMPACTS

Wells is a run-of-river hydroelectric project located at river mile (RM) 515.8 on the Columbia River in Washington state. It is owned and operated by the DCPUD pursuant to the terms of license no. 2149 issued by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) under authority of the Federal Power Act. The current license expires in 2012 and the DCPUD intends to relicense the Wells Hydroelectric Project.

There are numerous aquatic plant and animal species that, for their natural survival, utilize or require the river habitat occupied or influenced by Wells. Among these are several species of anadromous salmonids, including stream-type chinook salmon, ocean-type chinook salmon, summer steelhead trout, coho salmon and sockeye salmon. These fish are the primary focus of the HCP and are subsequently addressed herein as the "Plan Species". As of the date of this plan, only steelhead are listed as threatened or endangered under the ESA, but all of these salmonid species population levels are of concern. Measures to protect and enhance their status in the mid-Columbia River reach are a primary purpose of this plan. In particular, issues exist regarding direct, indirect and cumulative impacts of Wells' operations on the survival of both juvenile salmonids migrating downstream to the ocean and adults migrating upstream to spawn. The most significant issue at this time involves juvenile salmonid mortality.
Impacts of Wells operations on other aquatic plant and animal species utilizing the project area are less well known. No such species is currently known to be jeopardized by project operations. However, the plan

recognizes the potential need for future mitigation measures for one or more of such species, and provides a mechanism for addressing those needs if they arise.

ON-SITE MITIGATION MEASURES FOR SALMONIDS

In 1990, the DCPUD, Wells project power purchasers and the resource agencies and tribes entered into a long-term fisheries settlement agreement for the Wells project. This agreement established the DCPUD's obligation with respect to the installation and operation of juvenile downstream migrant bypass facilities and measures; hatchery compensation for fish losses; and adult fishway operation. For the purposes of the Wells project, these measures, in conjunction with existing hatchery compensation programs, were considered to conclusively fulfill the DCPUD's obligation to protect, mitigate and compensate for the anadromous fish resource. Compensation was initially established at 14 percent loss for anadromous fish with the actual loss and resulting compensation to be established through a project survival study.

The Wells project has a functional bypass system with a fish passage efficiency of 89 percent for both spring and summer salmonid migrants. The goal of the HCP is "No Net Impact" (NNI) of the project to the plan species. Components of NNI include an objective of 95 percent juvenile dam passage survival with a 91 percent survival of the total project (reservoir, dam and tailrace). This objective includes an unavoidable loss of 9 percent of the Plan Species to be made up with productivity increases in hatchery compensation and off-site tributary habitat improvements.

OFF-SITE COMPENSATORY ACTIONS AND THE CONSERVATION FUND

Compensation for (up to 2 percent of unavoidable losses at the Wells project will be provided by the establishment of a Tributary Habitat Fund (the Fund). The Fund will be established with the authority to expend money contributed by the DCPUD and other participating entities for activities outside the aquatic boundaries of the Wells project; such activities will be designed to increase productivity of salmonids in the mid-Columbia area. Off-site measures likely to be supported by the Fund include habitat restoration and improvement work in the primary mid-Columbia tributaries.

WELLS PROJECT COORDINATING COMMITTEE

The Wells HCP will utilize a biological/technical committee consisting of state and federal fishery agency representatives, tribal representatives a representative from the power purchasers of the Wells project and a representative from Douglas PUD. This Committee will serve to advise the project owner on implementation of the on-site measures called for or contemplated by this plan.

100 PERCENT EQUIVALENT SURVIVAL GOAL

A biological objective of the Wells HCP is to achieve "No Net Impact" to productivity of salmonids passing

through the Wells project. This objective is referred to in the plan as "100 percent equivalent survival,"to be achieved by a combination of on-site survival and increases in off-site productivity. If the District achieves dam survival of 95 percent and project survival of 91 percent and fulfills its obligations under the hatchery and tributary sections of the HCP it shall be deemed to have achieved no net impact.

PROVISIONS FOR UNKNOWN IMPACT ON OTHER AQUATIC SPECIES

As there are no known impacts of the Wells project that do or are deemed likely to jeopardize the continued natural existence of any aquatic plant or animal species other than salmonids utilizing the Wells project area as habitat, this plan does not require any on-site or off-site mitigation measures for other species. The scope of the Wells HCP, however, includes any potential problems or concerns about aquatic species other than salmonids that may arise during the plan's fifty year term. To provide the flexibility necessary to be prepared for the contingency of some currently unidentified species requiring special protection, as noted above, the DCPUD shall initiate JFP consultation to establish a decision making and implementation process during the entire listing or action process and throughout the status review of any such species.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The Wells HCP proposes monitoring and evaluation of both on-site and off-site measures for salmonids. The on-site studies will be used to index or adjust the DCPUD's compensation for unavoidable losses depending on the Wells project mortality test results.

COSTS AND FUNDING

Costs for the Wells HCP can be divided into two components. First, the cost associated with on-site measures in the reservoir, at the dam and in the tailrace. These costs include construction and annual operation of the bypass system; predator reduction activities; adult fish ladder operations and modifications; operation and maintenance of its ongoing hatchery program; and monitoring and evaluation studies. The second part is the DCPUD's contribution to the Tributary Habitat Fund, which will finance off-site tributary activities. Funding of the Wells HCP will be provided directly by the DCPUD.